

Palmer Park Apartment Buildings Historic District

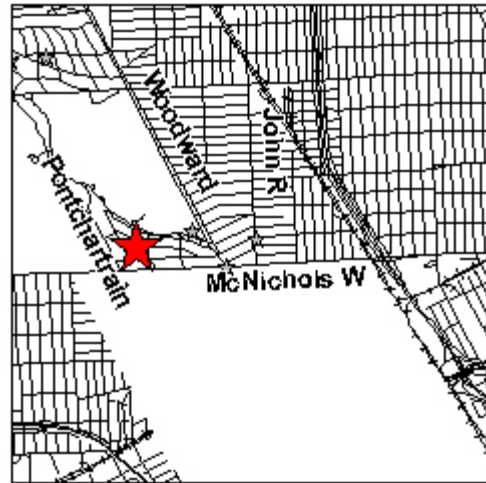
General boundaries: Covington Avenue, Ponchartrain Boulevard, and McNichols Road.

Local

State

State Marker

National ✓ 5/21/83



Whitmore Plaza

Photographs courtesy of Michigan State Historic Preservation Office

Historic overview:

Palmer Park Apartment Buildings Historic District is a community of multi-family dwelling types. The buildings are significant as some of the finest and most varied examples of apartment building design in Michigan, and together form a unique exemplar of the development of this building type. Palmer Park is an example of a high-density community incorporating a suburban concept of living in an urban environment. It is also important for its associations with the lives of prominent Detroit residents of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The first recorded land purchase in the area occurred in 1818 from the U.S. government by James Abbott. Abbott was Chief Justice of the Wayne County Court and Justice of the Peace in the county. An adjacent lot was soon purchased and then sold to James Witherell, a Judge of the Supreme Court of Michigan Territory, and Revolutionary War hero. Witherell's land became his grandchild's, Thomas Palmer, Jr. In 1885 the Palmers had the prominent architecture firm of Mason & Rice design a rustic log cabin style summer house, which still remains.

Palmer collaborated with neighbors to develop a subdivision development, but died in 1913 before this was realized. Many of the investors shared his interest in creating a high quality urban living environment for middle class families and reflected this in their buildings. From 1924 to 1964, fifty-six apartment buildings were constructed in Palmer Park. Most were designed to accommodate middle and upper-middle-class tenants and reflected the latest concepts and technology in multiple family dwelling unit design. The area is still a popular place to live.

